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COMMITTEE ON NON-GOVERNMENTAL
ORGANIZATIONS
22 March-2 April 1993
Item 2 of the provisional agenda*

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Statement submitted by the World Federation of United Nations Associations, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category I

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 29 and 30 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

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The World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) is an international non-governmental organization promoting public understanding of the United Nations and mobilizing public support for its activities. We are working towards bringing the people closer to the United Nations and the United Nations closer to the people. From among our 78 member associations two thirds come from developing countries.

It is our considered view that the United Nations should be open to non-governmental organizations as broadly as possible. We highly value the contribution that non-governmental organizations in consultative status make to the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies, and we value as well the contributions made by non-governmental organizations not in consultative status, under special arrangements, to various United Nations organs and bodies and to past world conferences.

WFUNA is in agreement with decision 1993/214 of the Economic and Social Council that a review take place of the overall arrangements for consultation

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* E/C.2/1993/1.

with non-governmental organizations. Since Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968 will be re-examined and updated, if necessary, in the light of recent experience, the fundamental purpose of such a re-examination must be to expand the participation of the non-governmental sector in the work of the United Nations and of the Economic and Social Council. In other words, the process must have as its fundamental objective the expansion of rights rather than their limitation.

We are very disappointed to note that this unfortunately has not been the case with regard to the rules for the participation of non-governmental organizations in the Commission on Sustainable Development. These rules have eliminated the right to have written statements circulated as official United Nations documents. They have also limited the right to address the Commission by requiring non-governmental organizations to address the Commission through spokespersons. Thus, the rules of procedure adopted by the Economic and Social Council curtail participatory rights already acquired by non-governmental organizations in consultative status, categories I and II, as well as those on the Roster. It is our view that not only have the rights of consultative non-governmental organizations been diminished but those non-governmental organizations who were given the opportunity to apply for Roster status because of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development process are, in fact, not being given any real participatory rights.

We wish to emphasize that, most unfortunately, the debate over the role of non-governmental organizations in the Commission on Sustainable Development concentrated on accreditation procedures rather than the more important participatory rights. We also wish to bring to the attention of the Committee that despite all the verbal support given to "non-governmental organizations from the South", they, in fact, are the most victimized by these new rules. It would be more difficult for them than from "non-governmental organizations from the North" to bear the cost of printing their written statements and of physically delivering them to the United Nations.

WFUNA is more than willing to play its full part in the re-examination of Council resolution 1296 (XLIV), wishes to be fully involved in that process and intends to present specific suggestions at the appropriate time. We would do this in the spirit of ensuring that the United Nations becomes increasingly responsive to the views and concerns of peoples' organizations, whether they be international or national in scope, whether they be representative of northern concerns, southern concerns or both, whether they be broadly based in concern or narrowly focused in interest.

Finally we wish to urge again that such a re-examination must re-confirm the already acquired rights of non-governmental organizations recognized officially by the Economic and Social Council.

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COMMITTEE ON NON-GOVERNMENTAL
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22 March-2 April 1993
Agenda item 2

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Statement submitted by Soroptimist International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category I

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 29 and 30 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

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Soroptimist International is a non-governmental organization with membership representative of the many cultural and ethnic groups of women in over 100 countries of the world.

Soroptimist International has enjoyed consultative status with the Economic and Social Council for 40 years and in 1984 was granted consultancy status, category I, in recognition of its wide range of activities in the economic and social fields that are the concern of the Council and its subsidiary bodies.

With representatives active in the United Nations centres at Geneva, Vienna, Paris and New York, Soroptimist International has not only promoted widely the work of the United Nations, but on many occasions has also provided expert assistance to Governments and secretariat staff at these locations as well as at national levels.

Soroptimist International feels that the consultative process is quite unique in that it enables the United Nations to avail itself of the technical expertise and knowledge of non-governmental organizations. The Council, through its Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, has set up a valid method of determining the competence of non-governmental organizations and their usefulness to the work of the United Nations. Moreover, the Committee has always viewed with seriousness and carried out with much diligence its mandate to place non-governmental organizations in this special consultative relationship.

Soroptimist International feels that the Economic and Social Council, pursuant to resolution 1296 (XLIV), fully addresses the concerns expressed and the procedures called for in Article 71 of the Charter of the United Nations, and that the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations has been consistent in reflecting the desires of member States, the United Nations Secretariat and non-governmental organizations in establishing a collaborative community in which the capabilities of non-governmental organizations can be brought to bear on the work of the United Nations. However, Soroptimist International feels that recent actions taken by other bodies regarding the participation of non governmental organizations has weakened and could make irrelevant the work of the Committee over the years.

Soroptimist International is deeply concerned by the fact that the procedures adopted at the recent organizational session of the Economic and Social Council regarding representation of and consultation with non-governmental organizations in the Commission on Sustainable Development, as set forth in Council decision 1993/215, while allowing for a more fully and widely distributed representation which Soroptimist International endorses, does in fact limit the participation of non-governmental organizations, categories I and II, by eliminating rights and privileges provided for in Council resolution 1296. Soroptimist International finds this regrettable. The Council has opened the halls of the Commission to a large number of non-governmental organizations, which in itself is commendable; however, the Council has called for like-minded non-governmental organizations to be heard through one or more designated spokespersons. Non-governmental organizations, similar to member States, are proudly defensive of their independence and of the goals and purposes for which they were formed. No one non-governmental organization can speak on behalf of all other non-governmental organizations, as recently occurred at the

Commission's organizational session, without first consulting those non-governmental organizations for whom it is presumably speaking.

There have of course been many instances where some non-governmental organizations voluntarily grouped together to issue a joint statement, either written or oral, but such statements were given in the names of only those non-governmental organizations that had voluntarily signed them.

Soroptimist International considers that it may be time for a review and that there may be a need for certain structural changes (for example, the Committee now meets every two years instead of annually); however, the basic intent of Council resolution 1296 should not be altered, and whatever changes are envisioned should involve expanding facilities and resources to enable even greater participation and dialogue and strengthen the contacts between Governments and non-governmental organizations.

Soroptimist International therefore hopes that the member States of the Committee on non-governmental organizations will bring the following points for consideration to the attention of the Economic and Social Council:

(a) That representation should be open only to national and international organizations that can make a viable contribution to the work of the Council;

(b) That the many organizations currently in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council whose headquarters are in industrialized countries have membership that extends to the grass-roots level of local communities throughout the developing countries, and that their current leadership and policies fully reflect the concerns and wishes of these members;

(c) That eliminating the reproduction and distribution of non-governmental organization statements by the United Nations Secretariat will actually be more detrimental to national non-governmental organizations, especially those in developing countries whose budgets may not be adequate to produce statements in the number of languages and the quantities required for distribution;

(d) That any review undertaken should be carried out in consultation with Secretariat staff that have benefited from consultation with non-governmental organizations as well as with the non-governmental organizations themselves.

Soroptimist International feels that the consultative process has proved beneficial to the work of the United Nations and that its continuing value can only be enhanced by:

(a) Wider and fuller understanding of the consultative role of non-governmental organizations as one distinct from the public relations role;

(b) Providing for non-governmental organization participation in the major organs of the United Nations and their subsidiary bodies;

(c) Restoration of the Working Group on Relations between Non-Governmental Organizations and the Secretariat and United Nations Programmes (mentioned in document ST/SGB/209), which monitored compliance with the rules and guidelines governing the non-governmental organization/United Nation relationship;

(d) Increasing of both human and financial resources in order to provide to the ever-expanding number of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council the proper services necessary to meaningful participation.

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COMMITTEE ON NON-GOVERNMENTAL
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22 March-2 April 1993
Agenda item 2

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Statement submitted by the International Chamber of Commerce, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category I

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 29 and 30 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968.

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The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC - the world business organization - is an international non-governmental organization which has enjoyed category I consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 1946. The ICC feels that this relationship has been a mutually beneficial one. It is a relationship which it values highly and which it wishes to enhance and strengthen in response to recent expressions of interest, by both Governments and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in a greater contribution by non-governmental organizations to the work of the Organization in such areas as sustainable development.

The ICC has noted the decision taken by the Economic and Social Council at its organizational session for 1993, in conjunction with the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development and its rules of procedure, to undertake a general review of the overall arrangements for consultations with non-governmental organizations which are set forth in Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968.

To the extent that the underlying rationale for this decision is based on a desire by the Council to pursue a more open attitude towards the non-governmental community, the ICC would like to affirm that it believes that

the United Nations should be open to truly representative non-governmental organizations as broadly as possible. We also recognize that the circumstances in which Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) was adopted have changed and that it may be timely to consider whether certain modifications should be made. At the same time, we feel that the review should basically look to expanding the substantive involvement of the non-governmental sector in the work of the United Nations, particularly of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies.

As the World Federation of United Nations Associations has put it in its statement to the Committee, the process should have as its fundamental objective the expansion of the participatory rights and privileges of non-governmental organizations rather than their limitation, as may result from the operation of the rules adopted for the participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

We believe that the basic rules embodied in Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) still have validity and should not be done away with if the United Nations and the non-governmental community are to derive maximum benefit from the consultative process. In particular, the very real distinction between non-governmental organizations that are truly global in scope and that represent important constituencies with broad concerns and those with a limited membership and a narrow focus is fundamental. Placing all non-governmental organizations, regardless of representativity and range of concerns, on the same level would not make the consultative process a more efficient one.

In this connection, it may be useful to recall that the ICC is a genuinely global organization with members in 130 countries, North and South, industrialized and developing, and in transition to a market economy. This world-wide representation of the private sector is reflected in the composition of the ICC governing body - its Council - where 31 of the 59 countries which make up the Council are members of the Group of 77. And the Presidency of the ICC rotates among countries of both North and South; the current President is a well-known Indian businessman.

The ICC wishes to cooperate fully with the Committee and the Economic and Social Council during the re-examination of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) and stands ready to be an active participant in that process. Our approach to this re-examination will be motivated by a desire to help make the consultative relationship more effective and meaningful. We would hope that, in any case, our views would be taken into account as the re-examination moves forward.

Finally, the ICC would hope that the responsibilities in support of the relationship between non-governmental organizations and the United Nations of the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit in the Secretariat, which we understand will now be part of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, will be reaffirmed.